

A

REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Tuesday, February 7. 1710.

ICANNOT but hope, after so long a Contention, to see a brief Conclusion of the great Affair of the *African Trade* now depending before the *House of Commons*, since I observe, both the Company and the Separate Traders are order'd to bring in their several Schemes for securing the *Trade*.

I am not so arrogant to ascribe any thing to this Paper, in having so often said last Year as well as now, that this was the Essence of the Question—That the whole Clamour ought to be reduc'd to this short Head—And that Talking of any Thing else was to talk in a Circle: But I must say; I have wonder'd, that other People, who have pusht this Cause at the Compa-

ny, should go so far about—and make such a great Noise about Circumstances, when the only Question, that really can be spoken in, to the Purpose, is, which Way the Trade can be best settur'd? Securing the Trade is now the Question before us, and indeed there never was any other Question in the Case— If the Separate Traders cannot secure the Trade as well as an Exclusive Company, then I think, with Submission, all they can say of any thing else, is, *as all they have said seems to be* nothing at all to the Matter— That in an open Trade no Security can be given to preserve the Trade, seems to me a most certain and undeniable Truth, And I have not hitherto seen the least Attempt to prove it otherwise; the Gentle-
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men indeed spoke much and long about Mismanagements and Misapplications, Servants accus'd Masters, and Masters Servants ; Friends betray'd Friends, and even Conversation was brought upon the Stage, and I am sorry to say it—a Kind of Warmth appear'd, on one side especially, that had but little Regard to Decency or Good Manners.

The Article of Trade it self also came to be debated, in which wise Men spoke ignorantly, F...s hastily, and K...s like themselves — But all this was off from the Business, not a Word of securing the Trade. The Separate Traders said, the Company had interrupted the Trade ; the Company said, the Separate Traders had ruin'd the Trade — And both these might be very true, but not one Man, as ever I heard, offer'd to say, they could preserve the Trade, or would give Security to preserve the Trade, without a Company.

Before I go on in this Argument, it can't be amiss to examine and state clearly what it is we mean by Securing the Trade ; and the solving this will of course lead us into all the rest of the Argument. It has already been decided the last Session of Parliament — That the Trade to *Africa* is a useful profitable Trade to the Nation, and ought to be preserv'd — and I need not spend any Body's time to make that out : The Colonies in *America*, who are supplied with all their Servants or Slaves from *Africa*, are sufficient Evidence in the Case, and who very well know they can't be preserv'd without it.

It remains then to determine, What we mean by Preserving or Securing this Trade ; and this is best explained, by letting the Reader into the Circumstances of the Trade ; *such as these, Viz.* (1.) That the Trade is carried on with Heathens and People without Government, where you can't Treat by Ambassadors, or Manage your Affairs by Envoys and Residents — That there are a Multitude of Nations with whom you Trade, and with whom you must Treat, whose Customs, Manners and Language are different, who are tied by no Laws, observe no Rules, but act just as meet Nature directs ; and that there is no

Corresponding with them, or Managing by Negociation, much less can we have our Factors or Merchants reside there as in other Countries : There is no General Head or Governour, to whom you may have recourse, or from whom you may obtain Redress in Cases of Injury or Oppression from the Natives — These things make the Trade be carried on meerly by Force, and you carry on your Commerce as Princes make Treaties, *Sword in Hand*.

2. You are to observe, That our Neighbours the *Dutch*, *French*, *Portuguese*, &c. but especially the *Dutch*, are our Rivals in this Trade — and that either by Force or Stratagem over-powering the Natives, or Wheedling them, or other Methods, they have all in their Turn discover'd their good Will to pull down and supplant the English Trade there, and this by several Methods, as is very easie to make appear, and indeed has been made very plain on several Occasions — Now against both these Articles, it has been found the only proper Means of Preservation, to carry on the Trade by Force, and by building Forts and Block-houses in convenient Places, to support our Commerce, and defend it, as well against the Treachery of the Natives, as against the Force and Power of our aforesaid Rivals — And Experience has not only convinced us that this is the only way to preserve the Trade, but the separate Traders, and the Witnesses they brought to the Bar of the House in the last Session of Parliament, own'd it — Nay, I heard One, and one of the forwardest, of the Separate Traders Evidences say in the House — That he hop'd none would pretend to alledge, that it was not absolutely necessary to preserve the said Forts — But beyond all this, it was allow'd by the Committee of the whole House, that the Forts and Castles ought to be preserv'd.

This brings it down to the present Question, *viz.* Which way these Forts and Castles can be best secured ? And now we are to see what either Side can say for it — I shall guess at what they can say now, by what they did say before, which, till they shall say something new, will pass with me for a fair way of judging.

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The Company say, That being form'd and establish'd, and a Capital Stock sub-scrib'd and paid in— their Establishment did contain Terms and Provisions for the Preservation of the Trade ; and their Charter is a Pledge for them, that they will perform, and, as a Body Politick are able to, bind themselves to Performance ; and this really seems to have a Bottom to build an Argument upon, and is an effectual Security to the Nation, that the Trade shall be preserv'd ; because, whenever they fail, they are liable to a Punishment or a Dissolution ; and the Power that created them may set up such other Powers and Persons as they see Cause, who shall more effectually perform it ; and their Substance who forfeit, may be in some measure capable to repair the Damage.

The separate Traders agreeing that the Ports and Castles were to be maintain'd, tho', at the same time, they would pretend to lessen 'em to a very insignificant thing, proposed that a certain Mulet or Indulgo should be laid upon all the Traders for the Support of that Charge ; and this they said might be sufficient to preserve the Charge : Indeed they rest'd there, they only said it might be sufficient, they were modester than to say it was a Certainty.

And thus between May-be and May-not-be, all their Security for the Trade rest'd— What they will be pleas'd to offer farther now, will quickly be seen— And I shall go on to consider it as it comes in my Way.

MISCELLANEA.

I enter'd a little last Review upon the Subject of Bankrupts, as what the Parliament seems inclin'd to take into Consideration ; I nam'd the two fatal Extremes, upon which all the Attempts of Relief in this unhappy Case have hitherto split. *Viz.* The Cruelty of Creditors, and the Knavery of Debtors— I readily acknowledge, the last is very much the Cause of the first, or at least it is very much the Excuse for the first— But it is certainly true, that Anger may be unjust, and ought to be restrain'd, tho' it proceeds from just Grounds.

I began to state the Case of the two Sorts of Bankrupts that make up the Term, *viz.* The willful, fraudulent, designing Bankrupt: And this consists of two Sorts, (1.) Him that breaks on Purpose, with Design to defraud his Creditors ; or, (2.) Him, who having been oblig'd by Necessity to break, takes Occasion by Fraud, Reserve, and Concealment, to bring his Creditors to a small Composition, and rebuild his Fortunes out of their just Dues— Of these I say— They merit no Quarter ; Compassion is not a Debt to them ; they ought, like the less guilty Highway-men, be esteem'd

Felons, and dismiss'd Human Society at St. Tyburn — No honest Man can say one Word for them, but as Solomon says of the Murtherer, *Let him flee to the Pit, let no Man stay him.*

But there is another Kind of Bankrupt in the World, for whom something more may be said ; and I'll first give you his Character, and then recommend him to the Mercy of the Parliament ; he must be something less than Human, that can wish he should not be pity'd and reliev'd.

He has been a Trader, more or less considerable ; either his Ships have been taken, or his House has been burnt, or he has been surpriz'd in his Trade by Goods falling on his Hand, or his Charge increasing, and his Family decaying ; He consumes, or Knaves break in his Debt, *the last the most common*, or by some such Thing unforeseen, &c. so to him inevitable ; he is forc'd to break, and he calls his Creditors together.

The Man, honest in Principle, tho' distress'd in Circumstances, calls his Creditors together, offers frankly to surrender all he has in the World to them upon Oath, to pay them as far as it will go. But

Mr.